

**STUDY OF SOCIAL AND SPATIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF  
URBAN PUBLIC SPACE:  
CASE STUDY: ROME AND COLOMBO**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED FOR THE  
DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE (ARCHITECTURE)  
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MORATUWA  
IN MARCH 2005**

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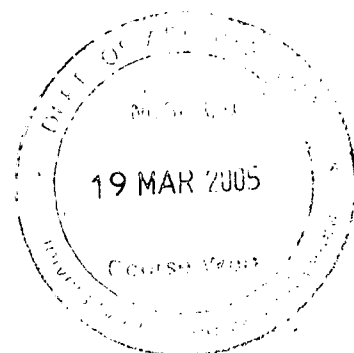
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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, Diploma or other qualification.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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I wish to extend my profound gratitude to thanks to several persons for the service, guidance and assistance given by them during the preparation and successful completion of my dissertation.

Architect Vidura Sri Nammuni (Head of the Department. Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa)

Dr. Upendra Rajapaksha ( The Dissertation Coordinator, Senior Lecturer, Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa) for his guidance and approvals on this study.

Dr, Harsha Munasinghe (Senior Lecturer and my Dissertation Tutor Department of Architecture, University of Moratuwa) for directing many aspects of the study, his patience and precious time expended in this respect.

My grateful thanks to Kapila Ayya and Kasun for their invaluable help.

And I am thankful to my aunt for typing, Sachith, Nuranga and Achini Nirmala and Thilanka for helping me to take Photos, Lakmali, Chaminda and Niroshana for printing.

Finally to my parents, my brother and my sister for their helps, and especially for my fat'her on printing problems.

## ABSTRACT

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Present day cities and their public spaces are not provided with the proper ways. It mainly causes to remain the urban spaces isolated without people and activities. Although the designers created visually pleasing beautiful places less consideration was given on its social and spatial characteristics in the proper way to create rich socio spatial urban environment full of people with different activities.

Most of the modern cities that designed recently paid little attention to their socio cultural values and their urban public spaces become lost as, and they have finally created unused dead spaces. The liveliness of the urban spaces is increasingly diminishing due to various negative effects. This has caused very badly for developing countries.

Rome had been a city of urbanized and developed but with magnificent urban spaces at history and so far. Studies of them will create to unearth the elements of the past, which are applicable in the present urban context.

In Rome the most live urban spaces are urban squares, which emphasizes and doubled the activities and movement comparing to other urban spaces. Therefore some urban squares in Rome have been examined. For Sri Lanka the Independent Square is a especially designed urban public square. Its characteristics have been studied as the squares in Rome.

Mainly the social and spatial attributes are studied which make strengthen the urban activities or how the social and spatial attributes intertwined our urban space, in response to its physical context too. And how the society of Rome has attached to the urban square, where it remains their quality as monumental or multipurpose or etc.

These places accommodate the urban man fulfilling various requirements and needs of the ancient Romans.

And how the urban square intertwined socially and spatially to suit the present situation for the population.

Hence study of how the urban square has to be created or make intertwined in urban space is essential to make public space.



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## INTRODUCTION

### Topic Explanation

“Architecture is the art of space making”

Space making is to contain the activities of man and experience these spaces by man in a way that the human senses can feel it. Therefore we move and orientate ourselves by responding these spaces and experiences. These kinds of experiences make us to connect in with the space. These meaningful connections gained through experience, and it makes the man dwelling on earth. It creates a sense of belongingness towards these spaces in peoples' minds.

Sense of belongingness plays an important role in producing architecture especially in urban public spaces such as streets, squares, parks, playgrounds, tree canopies, flight of steps and shopping centres. They can create a space for people to pause but not to pass through. For the urban dweller the public space is a space that one experiences the quality of the urban living and help to create social interactions, and these spaces for the urban dweller to spend a better urban life rather than spending their whole the life in small tight spaces, condominiums or housing apartments or flats. Urban Public spaces are dynamic spaces it must bring the communal life, spaces that are accessible to all, and that help man to identify himself with in the urban environment to maintain a close relationship with the spaces. These Public Spaces should inherent some essential characteristics to create identity, security, comfort and sense of belongingness in users' minds. Then it happens to go to public spaces. These characteristics are basic characteristics that determine the qualities of such spaces mainly social and spatial characteristics are the basic characteristics determine the qualities of such space.

Although the science and technology develop very much man as a social animal can't survive on earth without social interactions with each other otherwise many social problems arise. Therefore with immergence of cities much consideration has to be given for the development of public spaces, especially plazas, squares and streets.

In the case of urban design the main actors in the play are the square, the street, and the buildings that make up the public face of our towns and cities”

Cliff Moughtin- URBAN DESIGN streets & Square, pg.1

The square is identified as a very important entity as an urban public space in cities. And it has been the heart of the city and enlightens the life of the city, encourages lot of social interaction.

To generate this kind of sense it has to be act as a centre of human association and significant to the urban dweller, that to create a pause not to pass through, and to bring human intention to the city. Then it creates a space for public activities, where people meet each other, move freely communicates and do urban activities. Especially in Rome, there are a considerable amount of consciously created public spaces- urban public squares or piazzas such as St. Peters’ Square, Piazza Navona and etc. and they are very prominent in the western World.

This study is an attempt to study design Urban Public squares which socially and spatially vibrant.



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### Need of the study

Most of our present day cities, especially third World countries including Sri Lanka are growing very rapidly, making twice and thrice their population growth rate. The growing trend is condominium apartments, the area occupy by single person is lacking day by day. This has been happening in a very haphazard unplanned manner. Therefore this has also encroached into the public spaces of the urban dweller. Therefore the space occupied by the individual building against a public space is greater, they are minimized spaces.

As a result of this it does not provides proper architectural settings for the urban spaces, therefore their functions are decreasing. Such as social interaction, social and cultural activities and the urban spaces become abandoned, dull and inactive places and it was replaced by crime, psychological disorder ill health and unhappiness. Lack of knowledge and the negligence of social and spatial attributes in the environmental design bring this kind of situation. Most of the urban spaces and buildings designed

recently in our cities did not cater to this. Therefore they become dead spaces.

Due to this rapid mega development towns, open spaces, public buildings and other areas around the world are rapidly becoming similar, due to standardization of production methods, improper use of materials and lack of concern in urban environmental design. Therefore the cultural, social, and environmental and historical significance had been in different cities are gradually degrading and all become similar. E.g. Anuradhapura new town is not very much different from other commercial towns whereas its historical and religious significance was not there. People are losing their sensitivity, identity towards it. Therefore the Architects and Urban Designers has to provide meaningful socially responsive urban spaces and buildings where fulfilling their various requirements and needs. These spaces should be capable of accommodating public activities.

To bring forward all of these events together the designers has to be essentially deals with and cater to social and spatial attributes. Otherwise there is no continuity of urban public spaces. Although public squares become very prominent character in cities especially in Europe, But not much in Sri Lanka and third World countries. Sri Lankan cities are now rapidly developing if the Architects and Urban Designers have not much concerned about the development of Urban Squares of proper Architectural settings with socio spatial attributes. These spaces too remain as minimized dead spaces. Therefore the architects should be responding to user inside the building. Sri Lankan Architects are more concern with the visual, physical, and spatial qualities of the built environment, rather than its social relevance.

### Significance of the Study

In our urban spaces social and spatial attributes are intertwined. Therefore the designer should appreciate the important component of the built environment. The peoples' activity pattern has to be studied especially, when making an urban public squares in cities or towns. It has to be concerned on the variation in the no. of people in different settings and the time, types of

activities varies and degree of activities one may find, among differs urban spaces(Squares)

E.g. Piazza Navona as a multifunctional urban square.

Piazza di Campidoglio as a Monumental Square

Therefore it is of greater importance for the Architects to identify the issues between peoples' activity pattern and the supportiveness of these characteristics in order to create a live urban environment.

Urban spaces designed by architects at present are according to their image and they expect other people to adjust them. Therefore these spaces alienate man and make feel the urban dweller rootless.

#### Aims and objectives of the study

The present day urban spaces become disorderly, mismanaged and lack of place, the identity and the sense of belongingness to the urban dweller.

Study the social and spatial characteristics to create meaningful urban public spaces esp. public squares and study the public activities and find out the ways social and spatial characteristics have to be included and find out how these urban spaces has to be formed regarding to social and spatial characteristics.

Study the social characteristics of the urban public spaces and such as social interaction of different social categories of the society in the same urban space how they react to each other.

Study how these urban public Squares become coherent element of the collective urban form.

#### Methodology

This has been mainly a qualitative and experiential study only a little weightage for quantitative analysis. First discussion is about the notion of space and the concepts of urban space. The space is discussing directly to the specific situation- 'urban space'

Identify specific urban spaces in Rome and discuss about their social and spatial characteristics. Identify their activity pattern of the urban people and

to be analyzed how these characteristics become supportive to change the mode of the people as they are in urban spaces.

Last Chapter study and analyze selected practical situation in which the relationships with these characteristics and the peoples. Activity pattern are to be carefully studied.

#### Limitations of the study

The study is limited to examine mainly a small no of situations in the local urban context

The research study itself will be revealed various issues related to the particular subject. But in this study it will be revealed various issues related to the particular subject. But in this study it is mainly focussed on social and spatial aspects of the issues especially when a study of analyzing of urban public spaces consideration has to be given to micro climatic issues, form, specific function usage, type of mass etc... to make the idealistic situation for urban public spaces. But this study mainly focuses only on the qualitative attributes. How the social and spatial characteristics have been supportive to make real urban spaces especially the piazzas, urban squares and to make a cohesive urban form.